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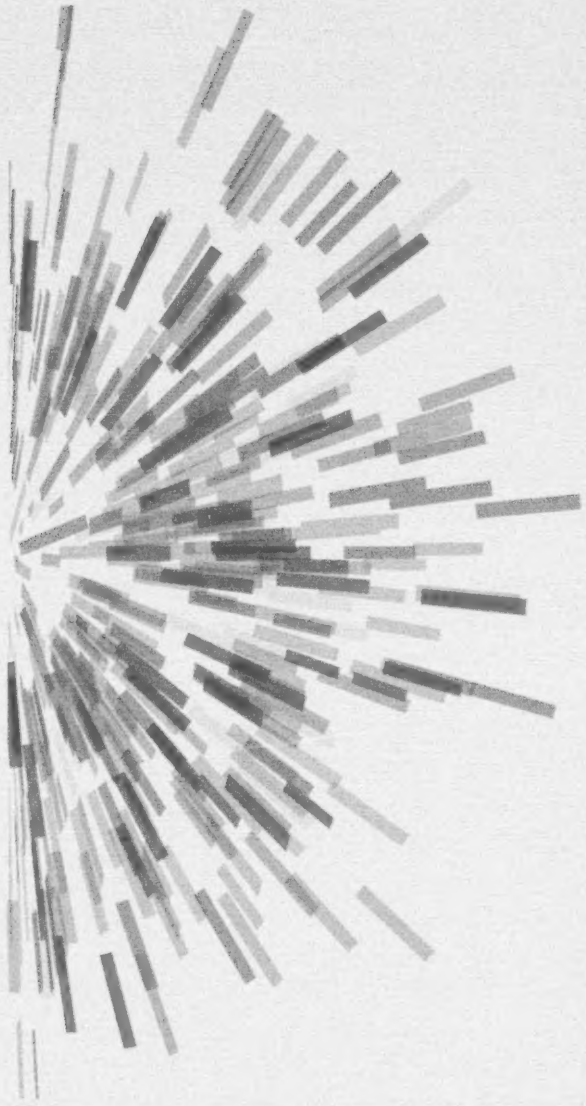

Federal Tourism Strategy
Annual Report

2012

Canada

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Federal Tourism Strategy
Annual Report 2012

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Message from the Minister of State

I am pleased to present the first annual report on Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy. The strategy is built on a new whole-of-government approach, to ensure better federal support for the Canadian tourism industry and to position it to become more competitive internationally. The results achieved so far speak to the success of this approach. There has been considerable progress since the strategy's launch, and we have been delivering on our commitments, reaching important milestones for many of them.

This report highlights the progress on the initiatives originally outlined in the strategy and undertaken by some 20 federal government departments and agencies from the time of the strategy was launched in October 2011 until December 2012. These initiatives are grouped according to the strategy's four priorities: increasing awareness of Canada as a tourist destination; improving visitors' access to Canada; encouraging development of new tourism products; and fostering an adequate supply of skills and labour for the industry.

The strategy was developed in close consultation with the Canadian tourism industry. I am grateful to industry leaders for their ongoing support and advice to help make the strategy a success. I would like to thank the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, in particular, for their input and collaboration.

The significant progress we have made is due to the close involvement of the Canadian Tourism Commission and my ministerial colleagues. We are working together and delivering on our commitments—from more visa application centres worldwide, to expanded air transport agreements, to my own tourism missions to promising new travel markets in India and China. All hands are on deck to ensure the strategy stays the course we have charted for it.

Recently, the World Economic Forum ranked Canada as among the most competitive in the world in terms of travel and tourism. Unsurprisingly, Canada continues to be a destination international travellers want to visit. However, we must not take these accomplishments for granted; our work is not over. Through the strategy, and following the strong industry lead, the Government of Canada is continuing to partner with the tourism industry to create jobs, growth and prosperity for Canadians.

Maxime Bernier
Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)

Supporting tourism

Tourism is currently undergoing healthy growth, with revenues in Canada reaching an unprecedented $81.9 billion in 2012. This record year represents a 4.2-percent increase from 2011.

Tourism activities directly generated 614,600 jobs in 2012, a 2-percent increase from 2011, and accounted for approximately $32.3 billion, or almost 2 percent, of Canada's gross domestic product. Canada welcomed 25.3 million foreign visitors in 2012, a 1-percent increase from 2011.

Canada's solid economy, safe destinations and very strong brand are positive factors that bolster our country's tourism competitiveness. In fact, the World Economic Forum ranks Canada in the top 10 countries in terms of travel and tourism competitiveness.

As a large contributor to the economy, the tourism sector—comprising businesses of all sizes, and responsibilities on the part of all levels of government—requires the cooperation of the private and public sectors to support competitiveness.

The goal of the Federal Tourism Strategy, launched in October 2011, is to enhance over the long term the Government of Canada's role as an effective partner with industry and other levels of government. The strategy facilitates coordinated and responsive action to support the sector and make the country an attractive destination for travellers.

The strategy brings together the work of some 20 federal departments and agencies through a whole-of-government approach focusing on four priorities:

1. Increasing awareness of Canada as a premier tourist destination
2. Facilitating ease of access and movement for travellers while ensuring the safety and integrity of Canada's borders
3. Encouraging product development and investments in Canadian tourism assets and products
4. Fostering an adequate supply of skills and labour to enhance visitor experiences through quality service and hospitality.

A steering committee of senior federal executives guides the strategy's implementation. Members share information about emerging federal initiatives that could have an impact on the tourism sector. This allows members to work together more effectively and to align the policy development and decision-making efforts that affect tourism.

Industry leadership remains crucial to developing and delivering the compelling experiences travellers are seeking, and the committee meets regularly with the industry to ensure ongoing communication.

This first annual report reviews activities from the time the strategy was launched in October 2011 to the end of December 2012. Organized under the four priorities, the report sets out the progress the various departments and agencies have made toward fulfilling their commitments. Each section also outlines other federal activities that were carried out to support tourism throughout the period. The annual report then looks ahead to work that will maintain the momentum achieved in the strategy's first 15 months to address the evolving needs of industry and seize opportunities as they arise.

1. Increasing awareness of Canada as a premier tourist destination

Through Minister-led, tourism-focused missions, the Government of Canada is helping enhance Canada's competitive tourism edge, and make the country and its travel offerings stand out in the international marketplace.

Coordinating marketing efforts of the various levels of government was on the agenda when the federal, provincial and territorial tourism ministers met in May 2012 in Saint John, New Brunswick. Harmonizing the work of municipal, regional, provincial-territorial and national marketing bodies to attract international travellers to Canada helps the tourism industry capitalize on its collective resources and compete abroad at top strength.

Meeting our commitments

Leading tourism missions

The coming into effect of Canada's Approved Destination Status with China in 2009 opened the door for increases of approximately 20 percent per year in arrivals from that country in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Following an unprecedented 2010 federal-provincial-territorial ministerial trip to China, the Government of Canada committed under the Federal Tourism Strategy to lead more high-profile, tourism-focused missions to key markets.

The Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism) promoted Canada as a leading tourism destination in China and South Korea in October 2011, gaining first-hand information about Canadian businesses working to sell Canada in these growing tourism markets, as well as the expectations of Asian travellers and outbound tour operators.

Most recently, the Minister of State led a mission to India in February 2013 to build on the Canadian Tourism Commission's (CTC) work to promote Canada as a destination of choice for Indian travellers and to strengthen bilateral relations with that country.

Realigning the CTC's business model

Beginning in 2011, the CTC maximized investments in international markets where the "Canada. Keep Exploring" brand leads. The CTC also ceded marketing leadership in the U.S. leisure arena to Canadian destination marketing organizations. The CTC remains invested in the U.S. market through Business Events Canada.

The CTC's operational footprint, both at headquarters and operationally, became leaner and more efficient. Some international offices were closed and general sales agents now deliver market activity. The CTC's headquarters was reduced and the CTC successfully co-located with provincial partners in key source markets such as China.

The CTC plays a role as a member of the steering committee of senior federal executives that guides the implementation of the Federal Tourism Strategy. The CTC brings a vital branding and marketing perspective to this body, which strengthens relationships among federal departments and agencies.

The CTC also supports the tourism industry, giving industry operators and other partners opportunities to connect with travel agents, tour operators and media in important international markets. In 2012, the CTC's annual showcase events included Canada Corroboree, Canada Media Marketplace, Showcase Canada–Brazil, Conozca Canadá, GoMedia Mexico and Showcase Canada–Asia. Prominent tourism industry marketplace conferences were also hosted at home, such as the GoMedia Canada Marketplace and Rendez-vous Canada.

Modernizing the CTC board

In 2009, the CTC undertook a broad assessment of its governance structure. This review resulted in recommendations for a streamlined governance framework that would be more relevant to government and industry. Almost all recommendations have been implemented. A 12-member skills-based board of directors (down from a 26-member representative-based model) came formally into effect in March 2012.

The CTC has mechanisms in place to engage with industry, such as advisory committees and regular meetings with destination marketing counterparts in the provinces and territories.

Establishing the Signature Experiences Collection®

In 2011, the CTC launched the Signature Experiences Collection®, an inventory of experiences that exemplify Canada's tourism brand. The collection now showcases 163 unique, authentic and diverse tourism experiences from across the country, nine of which have an Aboriginal focus. The CTC promotes experiences from this inventory in its marketing campaigns in the 11 countries in which it invests. Tourism operators can profile their experiences in international markets, participate in cross-promotional opportunities with other operators and enhance business relationships with the travel trade. The CTC will be seeking additional applications in 2013.

Partnering to promote Canada

Complementing the CTC's targeted marketing campaigns, federal organizations committed under the Federal Tourism Strategy to work more effectively together to support tourism and benefit from ongoing cooperation.

For example, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), through the Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership, worked with the CTC to market Atlantic Canada as a leisure travel destination in the United Kingdom. This pan-Atlantic partnership—ACOA, the four provincial departments responsible for tourism and four corresponding industry associations—incorporates the CTC's "Canada. Keep Exploring" brand in all its international marketing and promotional materials.

ACOA and Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions (CED-Q) forged a successful collaboration with the Atlantic Canada Cruise Association and Cruise the Saint Lawrence to further build the already-growing international cruise ship market in Atlantic Canada and Quebec. This led to a common approach to international marketing and training. ACOA and CED-Q renewed three-year funding to both cruise associations. Nearly 875,000 cruise ship passengers arrived at seaports in Atlantic Canada and Quebec in 2012.

More examples of federal support for tourism

For the 100th anniversary of the Calgary Stampede, the CTC increased awareness in key international markets of "the greatest outdoor show on earth." Building on a partnership with Stampede organizers and Travel Alberta, the CTC's marketing efforts helped raise attendance by 20 percent.

The CTC launched the international marketing video 35 Million Directors in late 2012. Rolled out in key markets through campaigns and events, the video was also featured on the front page of the CTC's international websites.

Maintaining the momentum

The CTC is reinvigorating its work in the area of incentive travel, meetings and conventions through Business Events Canada. Ongoing collaboration will also be explored related to Canada's international trade priorities.

The CTC is carrying out a full overhaul of its Explorer Quotient® (EQ) industry toolkit to reflect the most recent research. The CTC has also updated the free EQ Profiles that provide intelligence for small businesses on customers in six markets.

2. Facilitating ease of access and movement for travellers while ensuring the safety and integrity of Canada's borders

New air transport agreements with China and India under Canada's Blue Sky international air policy are offering more business opportunities for these important emerging tourism markets. Enhanced visa processing and border services are making it easier and faster for people to apply to visit Canada and smoothly enter on arrival.

Meeting our commitments

Consultations on air transport priorities
Transport Canada consulted the Tourism Industry Association of Canada in 2011 and 2012 about priority markets with which it would be beneficial for Canada to establish reciprocal air transport agreements under the 2006 Blue Sky policy. Input was also obtained from provincial and territorial tourism officials. The goal of the consultations was to help set a calendar of proposed negotiations for new agreements.

Under Blue Sky, Canada has concluded agreements covering more than 70 countries, including a comprehensive agreement with the European Union's 27 member states. Since the launch of the Federal Tourism Strategy, Transport Canada has negotiated or expanded air transport agreements with a number of key inbound tourism markets, including India and China. These agreements provide additional flexibility for airline routing and pricing. Transport Canada continues its outreach to improve awareness of the opportunities available under air transport agreements.

The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities is engaged with industry and federal partners to better define concerns, and to establish a way forward to address short-term opportunities and advance longer term dialogue on air services competitiveness issues. The Government of Canada actively assesses the effectiveness of the federal air policy approach to ensure that it promotes a competitive and viable air transportation system. At the same time, the Government seeks to maximize the sector's contribution to Canada's economic prosperity, while ensuring Canadians are provided with the safest and most secure, efficient and environmentally responsible air services possible.

Through the Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative (APGCI), the Government of Canada is partnering with provincial governments and the private sector to develop a strategic transportation network. Collaboration under the APGCI led to the commencement of Sichuan Airlines service between Chengdu, China, and Vancouver in June 2012.

As of December 2012, air service advertisements must display the total price consumers will pay to fly, including taxes, fees and charges, for flights originating in Canada. This will benefit consumers by helping them to more easily compare prices and make informed travel choices. Input from the industry, consumer groups and the public helped guide this initiative.

Improved border experiences

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) now posts service standards on its website. The CBSA also developed a new video, *Arriving by Air: Welcome Home, Welcome to Canada*, to explain the process for entering the country by plane, and distributed it for airlines to play on incoming flights to Canada.

Building on the success of the Welcome to Canada signage and information program introduced for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the CBSA and the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) have extended the program at the Macdonald-Cartier International Airport in Ottawa until March 2016. Through the program, international visitors are greeted with images and messages showcasing Canada.

The CBSA is also working with Canadian airport authorities to facilitate and expedite travel, such as by allowing the baggage of international travellers transferring to domestic flights in Canada to move directly from arriving to departing aircraft without having to be brought to the customs hall.

Addressing requests from members of the Air Consultative Committee to improve the traveller experience, the CBSA has implemented measures to manage travel and trade flows in peak periods throughout the year. The Air Consultative Committee fosters collaboration between the CBSA and air industry stakeholders on border-related matters that benefit Canada, the economy and the air transportation sector.

Information on border wait times, and a duty and tax calculator, are popular applications on the mobile version of the CBSA website. These features were added in response to public requests. An automated service now provides more reliable wait-time information to drivers at six land border crossings in British Columbia and Ontario. The service was introduced at the Peace Bridge (Fort Erie–Buffalo) and Queenston–Lewiston Bridge (Niagara Falls) in July 2012. Travellers can also get up-to-the-minute wait-time information on Twitter.

Two modernized ports of entry—Kingsgate, in eastern British Columbia, and Prescott, Ontario—opened in 2012. The newly expanded and upgraded facilities are improving security and facilitating traffic flow. Both feature enhanced technology and increased capacity to process travellers and commercial goods more efficiently.

The CBSA's International Events and Convention Services Program (IECSP), with support from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), now provides border services officers with advance communication on upcoming events to enable them to verify low-risk travellers and event-related goods and allow them to enter the country more quickly. As well, the IECSP has developed an online registration tool to help guide event organizers and participants through entry requirements.

The IECSP participates in national and international tourism events hosted by the CTC and has developed a video outlining the most efficient and effective method for getting participants, delegates and materials into Canada. With the CTC, the IECSP team is also updating a publication that provides a thorough overview of the factors to consider when bringing an international event to Canada.

Enhanced visa services

Canada issued a record one million visitor visas in 2012—a nearly 40-percent increase since 2004. The Government of Canada strives to issue visas as quickly as possible to facilitate travel for legitimate visitors and to benefit from the economic spinoffs they bring to Canada. Visitors can now apply and pay for their applications online.

CIC is carrying out a major expansion of Canada's network of visa application centres to improve accessibility for clients. There are currently 60 such centres in operation in 41 countries, up from 40 in 21 countries at the time the Federal Tourism Strategy was developed. New centres are expected to open in 2013, with 131 locations confirmed. As part of this rollout, CIC is working with the CTC to explore ways to promote tourism products at the centres.

The expansion is being supported by the deployment in 2012 by CIC of its Global Case Management System, to reduce the systems used to process and manage visa applications, and to allow CIC to move work to where resources are available for processing.

CIC is further simplifying the application process for temporary resident visas. Canadian missions in China received 34 percent more temporary resident visa applications in 2011–2012 than in the year before.

CIC continues to promote multi-entry visas both in the lead-up to biometric enrolment and in efforts to reduce repeat applications from low-risk travellers. Canada issued 49-percent more of these visas from 2010 to 2012.

Canada makes its visa policy decisions on a country-by-country basis, after extensive consultations with federal partners, in an effort to balance welcoming visitors with protecting the health, safety and security of Canadians.

In response to requests from the tourism industry, CIC and the CBSA also implemented a new policy to facilitate, on a discretionary basis, entry into Canada of individuals who are currently inadmissible because they have been convicted of certain offences, such as public mischief.

Foreign Convention and Tour Incentive Program
After consultations with industry, the Government of Canada announced administrative improvements to the Foreign Convention and Tour Incentive Program in May 2012. These included the launch of a service to inform tour operators in advance whether their tour packages would be eligible for a Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax rebate, thus eliminating the uncertainty some tour operators may have about whether their tours are eligible for the program. In addition, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) streamlined the processing of rebate claims, to reduce paper burden and mailing costs for tour operators and to speed up processing. The CRA also created and distributed a multilingual information pamphlet and made program information easier to find on its website.

Rental cars
The *Motor Vehicle Safety Act* has been amended to allow Canadian residents to bring U.S.-based rental vehicles into Canada for up to 30 days for non-commercial purposes. In addition, taxes on these vehicles were eliminated or reduced for Canadian residents, as of June 1, 2012. These measures give Canadians easier access to domestic tourism destinations and provide more flexibility for travellers. The changes will particularly benefit tourism in Yukon, since Canadians on Alaskan cruises were not previously allowed to come into Canada in a U.S. rental vehicle.

More examples of federal support for tourism

The Government of Canada has provided millions of dollars in support for tourism-related infrastructure since the launch of the Federal Tourism Strategy. Among the funded projects were VIA Rail modernization, enhanced cruise ship facilities in Saint John and St. Andrews, New Brunswick, and new bus service between accommodations and attractions in Niagara Falls.

Maintaining the momentum

Work is advancing on the Detroit River International Crossing. It will include a new six-lane bridge between Windsor and Detroit, customs plazas on both sides of the border and a connection to Interstate 75 in Michigan. Construction of a parkway to connect the new crossing to Ontario's Highway 401 is also under way.

In 2013, temporary residents from certain jurisdictions will be required to submit biometric information. This will provide visa officers with greater certainty when screening applicants and allow border agents to more readily confirm visitors' identity.

Several initiatives are in progress as part of the Beyond the Border Action Plan, which was developed to expedite trade and travel, while improving security throughout North America. Implementation of this plan included expanding and enhancing the 780,000-plus member NEXUS trusted traveller program, with new lanes and additional benefits to members.

In addition, consultations took place on how to facilitate cross-border business travel. In 2013, Canada will expand automated border wait-time services to the top 20 land border crossings and begin work to upgrade border infrastructure at a number of ports of entry; negotiate a joint land, rail and marine preclearance agreement with the U.S.; and update the existing air agreement.

3. Encouraging product development and investments in Canadian tourism assets and products

The Government of Canada coordinated a variety of events commemorating the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, which drew increased visitors to historic sites. Work has also begun in support of the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games in Toronto. Recognizing the importance of unique experiences in attracting visitors to Canada, federal departments and agencies are investing in cultural and sporting events, as well as tourism products and infrastructure. Federal financing through the Business Development Bank of Canada is supporting thousands of the small and medium-sized enterprises that largely comprise the tourism sector.

Meeting our commitments

Analysis of the potential role of signature attractions
Industry Canada commissioned a literature review to help determine the leading characteristics of strategically important destinations and attractions, including hub or gateway cities, to better understand their role in drawing tourists and stimulating economic growth. The department also undertook to host a forum in February 2013 to examine the results of this study with federal, provincial and industry stakeholders.

Aboriginal tourism
To support Aboriginal tourism growth and development, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) partnered with the Aboriginal Tourism Marketing Circle (ATMC)—a group of regional Aboriginal tourism associations and destination marketing organizations—to develop a national manual on Aboriginal tourism market readiness and authenticity standards, to be launched in 2013. AANDC also initiated discussions with the ATMC in 2012 to analyze cruise industry opportunities for Aboriginal tourism.

Parks Canada and AANDC conducted a pilot project related to establishing Aboriginal cultural tourism businesses in or near Canada's national parks and historic sites. A report on lessons learned and best practices will be available in 2013 to support future initiatives.

Parks activities
Parks Canada has begun the process of amending its communications policy to permit third-party advertising in park publications. This is expected to better support tourism businesses in park communities, allowing them to raise awareness of their products and services with visitors.

More than 1,700 people took part in Parks Canada's Learn to Camp program over a weekend in June 2012 at 17 national parks and historic sites across the country. The "Learn to Camp" mobile application debuted in April 2012, featuring a camping checklist, cooking ideas, photos and information to help first-time campers plan and enjoy a camping trip in a national park.

Also in 2012, Parks Canada launched its 10-year Duke and Duchess of Cambridge Youth Ambassador program. This program recruits two dynamic young adults to engage their peers in learning about and experiencing first-hand Parks Canada's iconic places.

Cultural, heritage and sport programming
Among the notable events of the year was the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812. The Government of Canada provided funding for a wide range of infrastructure and other projects associated with the anniversary. Media attention on the conflict and sites where it took place, such as Fort George in Niagara, helped draw more visitors to those sites in 2012 than previously.

In Budget 2012, the Government reiterated its support for the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games in Toronto. This funding will be directed toward sport infrastructure, legacy initiatives and essential services.

Recognizing the economic and social benefits that tourism brings to operators in the culture, heritage and sports sectors, Canadian Heritage will actively promote a Federal Tourism Information Kit to its stakeholders. The kit will help them identify tourism opportunities, access resources, and build capacity and expertise.

Millions of dollars in federal funding supported sporting events such as 2012 international championships in women's wrestling, junior open water swimming and women's baseball. Among the many arts and culture events Canadian Heritage funded in 2012 were the Festival Western de St-Tite, the Festival of the Sound and the FrancoFolies de Montréal.

Regional development
The Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor) adapted the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's (ACOA's) very successful VISIT training and development program to the needs of its managers and economic development staff. FedNor also provided funding to, among other groups, the Moose Cree First Nation to develop a plan to create jobs and enhance tourism in Moosonee and the surrounding area.

Industry Canada completed a report on the development potential of tourism opportunities in official language minority communities to foster economic growth and diversification in those communities.

ACOA launched the Strategic Tourism Expansion Program (STEP) in 2012 to help communities become sustainable tourism destinations. Through STEP, community business leaders and tourism operators work with representatives from ACOA's regional offices, provincial departments of tourism, regional tourism associations and municipal governments to develop and execute sustainable tourism development plans.

Contributions by regional development agencies to tourism in 2012 also included the following:

- ACOA's support for new and improved tourism infrastructure across the Atlantic Provinces, including an arts centre in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, the tourism information centre in Grand Falls, New Brunswick, a ski resort near Clarenville, Newfoundland and Labrador, and a new outdoor multicultural events centre in Charlottetown, P.E.I.
- Western Economic Diversification Canada's investment to upgrade the Dawn Mountain Nordic Centre at B.C.'s Kicking Horse Mountain Resort
- Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions' contribution to the construction of the Port-au-Persil interpretation site in the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park.

More examples of federal support for tourism

The following programs support small and medium-sized enterprises, which represent 98 percent of tourism businesses in Canada:

- The Business Development Bank of Canada, which provides financing and consulting services to Canadian businesses, had roughly $2.2 billion in financing commitments for more than 3,000 clients in the tourism sector, as of December 31, 2012.
- The Canada Small Business Financing Program helps to increase the availability of financing for small businesses that would not otherwise be able to obtain it.
- The Canada Business Network (CBN) helps small businesses and entrepreneurs through online, telephone and in-person access to reliable and up-to-date information on government programs and services. In 2012, Industry Canada added tourism content to the CBN website, in partnership with the provinces and territories.
- BizPaL provides an online customized and integrated list of the permits and licences required to start or grow a business in Canada.

Maintaining the momentum

Planning for the celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017 is under way, with 2012 marking the five-year countdown. Canadian Heritage will be delivering events and activities to attract visitors and Canadians, and encourage them to learn more about significant milestones in Canada's history leading up to this important anniversary.

Sport Canada is contributing to the Regina 2014 North American Indigenous Games, the largest sporting and cultural gathering of Indigenous people in North America.

Construction of the new Glacier Discovery Walk on the Icefields Parkway in Jasper National Park began in 2012. This accessible 400-m interpretive boardwalk and glass-floored observation platform will allow visitors to view the glacier and learn about the associated science, and natural and local Aboriginal history.

Infrastructure Canada is contributing to the construction of a new and larger home for the Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton, with features such as an interactive children's pavilion and a gallery for international exhibitions. Work on the project has begun and the grand opening is set for 2016.

The new federal Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel was launched in May 2012 to inform wildlife conservation efforts while recognizing that hunting, angling and trapping are central to many Canadians, as well as to tourism. The panel will provide balanced advice to the Minister of the Environment on issues such as species at risk, wetland protection, conservation of biodiversity, and stewardship of Canada's marine and terrestrial wildlife.

4. Fostering an adequate supply of skills and labour to enhance visitor experiences through quality service and hospitality

The continuing participation by the Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism) in tourism recognition events is raising the profile of individuals and groups providing exemplary service and helping to inspire future leaders. In line with this approach are Parks Canada's efforts to further develop its professional workforce, and federal funding to assist with skills development training in the tourism sector.

Meeting our commitments

National recognition initiative
The Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism) has participated in industry recognition events since the launch of the Federal Tourism Strategy. These include the Hall of Fame Awards of Excellence luncheon during the Hotel Association of Canada's annual conference in March 2012 and the Canadian Tourism Awards at the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's yearly conference in both 2011 and 2012.

The Government of Canada is exploring other opportunities to showcase tourism careers and exemplary organizations. These efforts are intended to highlight the importance of training and recognition to attract and retain employees, and promote professionalism. They would also complement the efforts of provinces and territories to honour the hard work and dedication of the best in the industry.

Parks and employee certification
Parks Canada is working to have most or all of its permanent interpreters certified by 2014. The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC) has updated its *emerit* standards and training tools to this end. Certification will give interpretation staff a common understanding of basic principles and best practices associated with their profession, and allow them to better present programs, activities and products that meet the needs of visitors.

More examples of federal support for tourism

The tourism industry also benefits from programs and investments by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) that support a skilled, adaptable and inclusive labour force, and an efficient labour market.

To help individuals prepare for jobs in the tourism sector, HRSDC provided funding through the Sector Council Program to the CTHRC to develop industry-driven professional certification programs and national occupational standards, and to disseminate labour market information.

HRSDC provides skills development support to under-represented groups in the labour market, including youth, older workers and Aboriginal people, to help them gain skills for employment in a number of sectors, including tourism. For example, HRSDC funded more than 1,000 tourism-related projects under the Canada Summer Jobs program in 2011–2012.

Navigating Employment Pathways is a four-year HRSDC-funded project of the Métis Nation of Ontario to provide skills development and training-to-employment opportunities in the tourism sector to 240 Aboriginal people.

Since 2007, HRSDC has issued 8,035 Apprenticeship Incentive Grants and 2,110 Apprenticeship Completion Grants to apprentices in the cook trade, which is crucial to the tourism sector.

Canada's regional development agencies also provided support to the tourism workforce, such as funding to train local students to host and guide tourists in the North, and assessed the quality of services and visitor experiences in Atlantic Canada.

Maintaining the momentum

Through the Sectoral Initiatives Program (SIP)—the successor to the Sector Council Program—HRSDC will fund partnership-based projects that have a national scope and address skills shortages in various sectors of the economy by developing labour market information, national occupational standards and certification/accreditation regimes. The SIP will gather critical intelligence and share it through the Working in Canada website so that Canadians have a clearer picture of who is hiring and what skills are needed in key sectors.

Moving forward with a whole-of-government approach

Develop a forward agenda for tourism

The steering committee of senior federal executives that oversees and guides the implementation of the Federal Tourism Strategy met five times up to the end of 2012. This committee will continue to meet to monitor progress on the various commitments and initiatives, as well as to identify new opportunities for concerted action. Industry Canada's Tourism Branch tracks progress and provides strategic support to the committee and to the Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism).

Formalize tourism industry engagement

One of the steering committee's key roles is to engage with industry. To that end, industry members attended two steering committee meetings in 2012. These gatherings were the first opportunities these stakeholders had had to speak to representatives of all departments and agencies engaged in tourism at the same time. The goal of these meetings is to facilitate a constructive exchange of information and increase common understanding of tourism issues, to enable industry to play a more strategic role with government, and to foster coordinated and collaborative action.

Create a tourism business website

A new tourism website—Supporting Tourism—has been running since October 2011. It provides a single window for access to hundreds of tourism-related federal announcements, and information on the federal programs and services that support tourism.

Coordinate tourism research

In March 2012, in collaboration with the Canadian Tourism Commission, Industry Canada held the first annual tourism research forum, with 14 federal departments and agencies in attendance. Representatives exchanged research results and plans for tourism-related research and analysis, with a view to identifying potential collaborative projects. The group is also exploring mechanisms to make it easier for federal organizations to more regularly share research findings.

Produce a tourism annual report

Developed with input from some 20 partner departments and agencies, this first annual report tracks progress on the commitments under the strategy, and identifies new and ongoing initiatives.

Maintaining the momentum

The Government of Canada launched the Federal Tourism Strategy to enhance its role as an effective partner with industry and other levels of government in support of an internationally competitive tourism sector. Those involved in its creation and implementation can be buoyed by their achievements. Progress thus far has demonstrated that much can be done by working together toward a common objective. This will continue.

The Government will build on its efforts to date to facilitate new partnerships and develop more effective ways to contribute to the success and strength of the sector.

Dialogue between the Government and Canada's tourism industry is ongoing to seek industry views and inform policies, programs and services, and thus help to create the conditions for success. At the same time, the provinces and territories are participating in the discussions through the Canadian Council of Tourism Ministers and other evolving networks and partnerships.

As Canada moves toward its 150th birthday in 2017, the nation has an opportunity to advance its position as a world leader and invite the world to join in the celebration. Through the Federal Tourism Strategy, the Government of Canada is positioning the country's tourism sector to take advantage of international growth opportunities, increase revenues and create jobs. The Government is confident it can expand on the success of the first 15 months' work and continue forward with its partners in the years to come.

Appendix: Federal tourism partners

The following departments and agencies are members of the Federal Tourism Strategy Steering Committee:

- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Canada Border Services Agency
- Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions
- Canada Revenue Agency
- Canadian Heritage
- Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
- Canadian Tourism Commission
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Environment Canada
- Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario
- Finance Canada
- Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
- Industry Canada
- Infrastructure Canada
- Parks Canada
- Transport Canada
- Western Economic Diversification Canada

Many other Government of Canada organizations carry out tourism-related mandates, including the National Capital Commission, national museums and galleries, and VIA Rail Canada. The Business Development Bank of Canada provides Canadian businesses, including those in the tourism sector, with flexible financing, venture capital and affordable consulting services. Statistics Canada maintains the National Accounts, the Tourism Satellite Account and the Human Resource Module of the Tourism Satellite Account, and conducts numerous surveys to provide timely and quality statistical information on trends affecting the tourism sector.